

Key Findings and Financial Constraints

The Study examined current and future traffic conditions in the US 95 corridor. With the input from Study participants the Project Team helped identify and summarize the short- and long-term needs in the US 95 corridor. In the Ohio Match/Garwood segment there are short-term needs to manage access and improve traffic safety conditions, and widen US 95 to four travel lanes to meet traffic demand. Any future improvements also need to provide adequate access to adjacent land uses.

Traffic safety measures and traffic control enhancements are needed within the Coeur d'Alene segment to meet current demand. Local arterial street widenings and circulation improvements are also needed to support the US 95 corridor. To meet the future growing in traffic, the US 95 corridor will need an access-controlled highway capable of 55 mile per hour traffic conditions. Meanwhile, the preservation and acquisition of key rights-of-way will be needed, so as not to limit future improvement options.

In the Ironwood segment there are needs for traffic safety and control enhancements to meet current mobility needs. This segment also needs local arterial street capacity improvements to relieve Ironwood Drive and US 95 traffic congestion.

The Spokane River Bridge segment will need both additional travel lanes but also separate bicycle and pedestrian facilities to meet the region's access, circulation and capacity needs. Short-term traffic signing and safety enhancements are needed in the Blackwell Island area. The Mica/Cougar Creek segment is in need of added capacity (additional travel lanes) and traffic control to improve highway operations and safety within state guidelines for safe and efficient highway operations.

7.1 Key Findings

There are a number of possible projects that ITD and the local jurisdictions can target for implementation within the next 20 years that will help reduce local traffic congestion and improve traffic safety. Several transportation system improvements can be implemented regardless of what long-range solution to US 95 is selected. The following projects have generally received significant support in the community:

Short-Term Projects

- Coordinating with the City of Coeur d'Alene, City of Hayden and Kootenai County to maintain a half-mile signal-spacing policy along US 95 between I-90 and SH-53 (to maximize the corridor's traffic capacity);
- Coordinating with the City of Coeur d'Alene, City of Hayden and Kootenai County to preserve and protect public rights-of-way along Huetter Road between I-90 and SH-53;
- Coordinating with the City of Coeur d'Alene to preserve and acquire public rights-of-way along US 95 between Ironwood Drive and Northwest Boulevard;
- Widening local arterial and collector streets crossing US 95¹ within the corridor (north of I-90), including Dalton Avenue, Hanley Avenue, Prairie Avenue, Hayden Avenue, and Lancaster Road;
- Investigating intelligent transportation system (ITS) applications within the US 95 corridor to better manage traffic operations on US 95 and the local arterial network (see **Appendix E**);
- Adding approach lanes to the US 95/Appleway intersection;
- Coordinating with local jurisdictions to plan and construct a shared use path and bicycle lane connector between US 95 and the Centennial Trail system;

¹ Per recommendations of the Kootenai County Area Transportation Plan – 1997-2017, (August 25, 1998).



- Constructing intersection improvements on US 95 at Ironwood Drive and channelization between Ironwood Drive and Walnut Street;
- Coordinating with the City of Coeur d'Alene to further assess the feasibility of extending Harrison Street westerly across US 95 to Northwest Boulevard;
- Enhancing safety along US 95 between the Spokane River and Upland Drive with signing and flashing signals;
- Looking for opportunities to address the community's criteria for enhancing the natural and aesthetic environment south of the Spokane River and provide pedestrian/bicycle facilities in concert with the nature preserve and other recreational activities;
- Widen US 95 to four travel lanes south of Cougar Gulch Road to Mica Creek;

Long-Term Projects

- Construction of a 55 mph, North-South mobility corridor between I-90 and SH-53, either on the existing alignment or along a new alternate route;
- Widening or replacing the Spokane River Bridge to include four travel lanes and a shared-use path for bicycles and pedestrians;
- Reconstructing the US 95/Blackwell Island intersection to provide a grade separation with directional on- and off-ramps to US 95 (this would require reconfiguration of local roads in the area); and
- Reconfiguring public road intersections and private access points to better meet ITD's access management policy south of Cougar Gulch Road to Mica Creek.

7.2 Financial Constraints

The US 95 Coeur d'Alene Corridor Plan identified the cost of three solution packages (see **Chapter 6**) ranging from \$304 to \$432 million during the next 20 years. Local arterial improvements were assumed under each solution package, at an estimated \$55 million.

There are two major, state or federal sources of revenue available to ITD and the local jurisdictions to fund US 95 and local arterial improvements within the study area: *federal aid* and *state user tax*. Federal aid revenue comes from the U.S. Highway Trust Fund, which receives federal user taxes on gasoline and special fuels. These funds are distributed across Idaho, generally based on road system mileage and ITD Board priorities. Idaho state user-tax revenues are deposited in the Idaho Highway Distribution Account from state fuel taxes, registration fees, and weight-distance taxes. These funds are generally distributed to:

1. State law enforcement, about 5 percent;
2. Local government at about 38 percent (cities, counties and highway districts); and
3. The State Highway Account at about 57 percent (ITD).

ITD's Funding Potential

Forecasting future funding for transportation improvements is highly speculative. The Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) which was passed by Congress in 1997 will expire on October 1, 2003. At present, Congress is working on reauthorization bill which will control federal

transportation spending over the next six years. Idaho's share of federal transportation money is yet unknown.

Based on historic funding levels, however, a 20-year funding forecast was prepared for the sole purpose of comparing US 95 improvement costs to anticipated available funds.

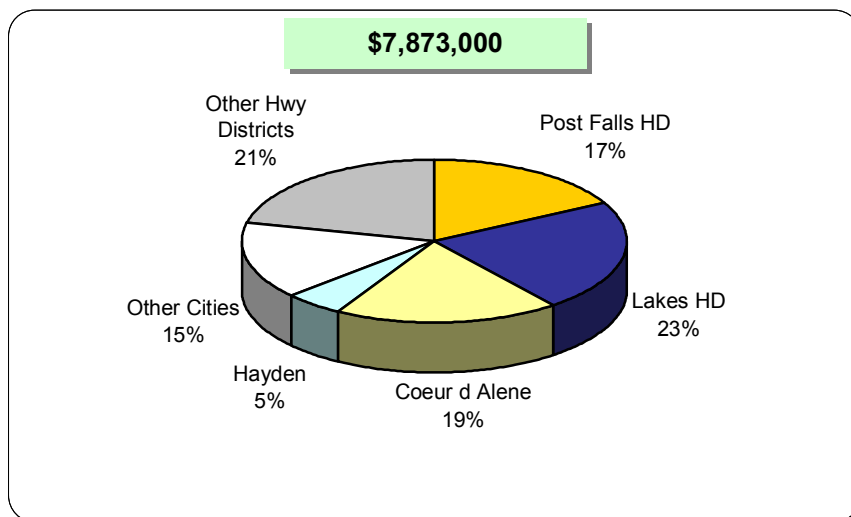
Using TEA-21 as a basis for estimating, ITD may have access to approximately \$2 billion in National Highway System and Surface Transportation Program funds over the next 20 years. Federal funds are distributed among all six ITD Districts. Approximately \$370 million of these moneys could come to District 1 over the next 20 years if previous distribution ratios are continued.

Assuming the *least expensive* of the US 95 solution packages, estimated at a total cost of \$304 million, and subtracting the local arterial improvement costs of \$55 million, leaves ITD needing to fund about \$249 million in US 95 improvements within the Coeur d'Alene/Hayden study area alone. These improvements alone, would consume nearly 70 percent of the entire estimated revenue forecast for NHS/STP funding in all 5 northern Idaho counties during the next 20 years.

Local Agency Funding Potential

Upon review of their current streets and highway budgets, it appears that local jurisdictions in the study area may be having difficulty keeping pace with regular maintenance and preservation, let alone funding major arterial, collector and highway capacity improvements. **Figure 7-1** summarizes 2001 Highway Distribution Account revenue distribution to the various local jurisdictions in Kootenai County. For those jurisdictions along US 95 in the study area (Cities of Coeur d'Alene and Hayden, as well as the Post Falls and Lakes Highway Districts) 2001 revenue distribution totaled almost \$5 million. Assuming these funding levels were sustained during the next 20 years, these jurisdictions (combined) would need to allocate more than 55 percent of all of their Highway Distribution Account (HAD) revenues to fund the \$55 million in local arterial improvements within the immediate US 95 study area. Today, local agencies use HAD revenues primarily for staffing, equipment, roadway preservation and maintenance projects and operations, not capital improvements.

Figure 7-1. Highway Distribution Account – 2001 Revenue Distribution in Kootenai County



Both ITD and the local jurisdictions have other transportation improvement problems and needs in Kootenai County and North Idaho. Neither ITD nor the cities and highway districts have prioritized their long-range improvement needs and funding plans within Kootenai County in general, or the US 95 study area in particular. Together, the study participants will need to set their project and funding priorities before long-range transportation solutions can be completed.

7.3 Next Steps

Further environmental study and engineering analysis will be required before any major state/federal highway construction projects can be selected. The selection and construction of any major option would take several years, and there will be significant opportunity for local public input, including business and local community leaders and elected officials. At some point, there will be a number of public meetings held to guide and direct the selection of a final solution.

A number of studies will need to be undertaken and projects completed which require ITD to coordinate with many of the local jurisdictions. These include:

- National Environmental Policy Act documentation of the US 95 Corridor Alternatives (determination of a Preferred Alternative);
- Preliminary and Final Design Analysis of the Preferred Alternative;
- Local Land Use/Transportation Plan for the Ironwood area; and
- Update the KCATT Regional Transportation Plan confirming the type, timing and funding of major arterial improvements, TSM and TDM program and project solutions, and local and regional (Spokane-Coeur d'Alene Corridor) transit solutions.

In the meantime, ITD and the community can best position themselves for the future by completing their Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in support of the next steps of planning for US 95. All of these studies, findings and plans will need to be coordinated with the newly formed Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), particularly regarding the designation and allocation of federal and state funding to plan for and construct major, US 95 improvements.